WHAT NATIONS AND CLASSES WILL PREVAIL?

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By DEAN INGE.

IN the heyday of British imperialism, towards the end of the last century, when we were all blind to the German peril, Dilke prophesied that "the world's future belongs to the Anglo-Saxon, the Russian and the Chinese races." The Germans were then working out their own theory of the world's future, in which none of these three nations counted for much.

Their belief is that they belong to the noble Aryan race, which, they maintain, dies out in a southern climate. There is some truth in this contention; but northern Europeans have proved that they can thrive, when they live on the land, in any but a tropical climate. The Jews and Chinese, who have survived in Ghettos and pestiferous towns, can live anywhere.

The fact is that the prevalence of a people is determined not by racial characteristics, but by economic circumstances. "Race" and "nationality" are catchwords for which men will fight as they fought for what they called religion four hundred years ago. But there are no pure races in Europe, and political anthropology is not a genuine science.

Population increases when (1) more food is produced in the country, (2) goods are manufactured which can be exchanged for foreign food, (3) the standard of living is reduced. The war has prevented twelve million births and effected eight million deaths, but the losses may soon be made good. Limitation of births only brings down the death-rate, and emigration does not reduce the home population by a single unit. Emigration, therefore, is the true means of spreading the English race and language, for which there is ample scope in Canada, temperate Australia and New Zealand.

Devices for stimulating population, such as endowment of parenthood, saving babies and housing reform, merely tend to tax the good stocks out of existence for the benefit of the bad. As a rule, the higher the stage of civilisation at which both nations and individuals have arrived the fewer are both the births and the deaths which take place in their midst. Thus, a superior race in a conquered country is generally doomed. Nothing fails like success, and the ruling people rule themselves out.

Likewise the upper and middle classes of to-day, in England, will probably disappear in favour of the aristocracy of labour of which we are now witnessing the creation. They, in their turn, will become exclusive and conservative, and will exploit the public for their own profit. Further, it is likely that when they have consumed the surplus wealth of the community they will repudiate the burden of maintaining the proletariat.

This privileged class will be unable to compete with races who have a lower standard of living, and who will therefore undersell them in the world markets. Then they will restrict their numbers, and will reverse the capitalistic process of crowding huge populations into the towns which began with the "industrial revolution" of 1760 and the succeeding years, and was initiated by the plunder of Bengal. The trade unionist, perhaps, will be allowed to place only one son in his union, and accordingly will take care to have no more; and the woman industrialist will further reduce the birth-rate by working more and more in factories.

Thus there will be a progressive decrease in every class, and gradually we may return to the quiet, mainly rural England of 1750, in which the growth of population was very slow. From the eugenic standpoint this consummation will not be a misfortune. The Englishman is not naturally a town-dweller or a money-grubber, but a countryman and an idealist. The quintessential Englishman is a Raleigh, Drake, Shakespeare, Milton or Wordsworth. London may one day be the spiritual centre of the world, when the labour parties, by destroying capital, have dissipated her wealth, committed suicide, and made our dense populations a thing of the past.

Reactions may be set up which will prevent the fulfilment of these predictions. What is important is that we should see the direction in which we are moving. It may even pay some of us to learn to think—there is so little competition.

Sir Auckland Geddes, in proposing a vote of thanks to Dean Inge, said:—I came here in the spirit of a student, in the spirit of one who was to learn, and I have learned a great deal. There were many true words which fell from the lecturer's lips. Those that struck me as quite the truest were "All government is bad." (Laughter.) At all events, I can assure you at present government is very bad. I know that perhaps as well as anybody else, and we are, as a matter of fact, at the present moment grappling with a series of problems the solution of every one of which depends upon the correct interpretation of the future of the English race. With regard to the lecturer's conviction as to the future of the English race, if the inhabitants of these islands are cut down from 40 million to some 5 million I do not know that that would make a popular election cry. (Laughter.) But even if we did get a Parliament elected with that cry, with that policy, the process of the execution of 40 millions is an unpleasant one, and so although I am responsible for putting in the Government ideas as regards reconstruction, I am afraid I cannot urge upon them the main thesis of our lecturer this evening. (Laughter.) I have no doubt that if we did cut the population down to 5 millions things would be much easier—but are we quite sure that this island is over-populated? We have only to go 60 miles from where we are now to meet people who have never seen a railway train, to meet people who have merely "heard" of London, to meet people who have never seen any self-propelled vehicle. England is undeveloped, uncolonised. England is a land of infinite wealth, lying ready to the hands of those who will

develop the resources of this country which were left lying idle at the time when the industrial revolution started. There are parts of the country which have never moved from that time to this. There is little doubt—there is none—that within the boundaries of England—I do not say Britain lest I should offend the subtle senses of our lecturer—food can be grown to support the 40 odd millions of inhabitants. It is not that the population of England is too great; in my opinion, it is that the population of England is wrongly employed. We have set ourselves to manufacture goods for export and left others to grow food upon which we live. It is quite possible for us to reverse that process and to set ourselves now to grow food upon which we should live, while the surplus population over those engaged in growing food—in the healthy occupation of growing food—might well be engaged in manufacturing for exports to those profitable lands in which Europeans cannot live and in which raw materials grow which we want and need for the full development of our civilisation. And so I would, if I might, urge upon our lecturer to think perhaps once again over what I understand to be his main thesis, namely, that this increase of population was possibly encouraged by the industrial revolution, but to admit the possibility is one thing, though even to prove it in one instance would not establish it as a law without exception; for not invariably does the needle of a compass point to the Pole. No one, not a soul, who knows the facts will disagree with him when he says that there is mortification in the body of the State at the present moment. There is a very serious mortification and that mortification cannot, believe me, be cured by anything but by the growth of the great emotion which is stirring the people of this country, which is stirring the people of the whole world, at this time, the emotion of human betterment. We have passed through a period which has lasted a century in which self-dependence was a watchword, and we are passing rapidly into a period of thought in which community over all is the motto. That is the changing spirit which is making the great difference in this land at the present time. Always, when you look back in history, you will find that in times when this great influence spread and swept through humanity there would be revolution, it may be bloodshed. Great movements of the spirit do effect in the truest sense revolution, but we are at present in the throes of a revolution which has now been going on for ten years and has changed the whole outlook. Ideals are changing, not only the ideals of the working class, but the ideals of the other classes. I have been more struck during the last few weeks than by anything else in the course of my life to find many great employers of labour, whom one perhaps foolishly regarded as absolutely immersed in money-making, coming to me or writing to me and indicating how they are affected by this new spirit of which I have spoken. I do not think that you can fairly speak or think of the future of the English race without thinking that this great spiritual movement, the emotion of human betterment, sweeping through the land just now—because in politics, in the affairs with which Governments have to deal, it is not accurate knowledge that matters,

it is emotion, and this great emotion moving now, as no emotion has moved in our or our fathers' times, is going to achieve more, I believe, for the English race within the next generation than anything we have ever read of. So I am no pessimist. (Cheers.) There are years of difficulty ahead of us for readjustment, and we know that in our own lives the future is full of uncertainty. I would not have the lecturer or you believe that I have not enjoyed and profited by the lecture. I have learned a great deal this evening from it.

Sir Bernard Mallet, Registrar-General, in seconding the vote of thanks, said :—I am afraid the Dean takes a malicious pleasure in living up to his reputation, but I generally feel that I agree with him more than I want to. At any rate, he thinks for himself and is never afraid to say exactly what he thinks, and he is one who has the gift of expressing his views and his conclusions with absolute clearness, and in simple, vigorous and terse language. He has taught me a great deal about the use of the figures for which I am officially responsible. (Laughter.) I think there are one or two points I would like to say a word or two upon, but I think perhaps I had better not. I am not able to look upon the loss of population with quite the same equanimity as our distinguished lecturer. At any rate, we can say this, that our population in 1914 was sufficient to withstand the threat of German domination.